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1973/11/13

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Authority NWD 971520
By JWF NARA Date 9/12/97

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Hot Line &
Accidental War.

Drafts handed
over

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Chou En-lai, Premier of the State Council
Yeh Chien-ying, Vice Chairman,
Military Affairs Commission, CCD
Vice Minister Tsai Hung-ching
T'ang Wen-sheng, Staff (Interpreter)
Mrs. Yang Yu-yung
Military Interpreter

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
Ambassador David Bruce
Commander Jonathan T. Howe
Mrs. Wilma G. Hall, Notetaker

TIME AND DATE: 10:00 p.m. - 12:30 a.m.
Tuesday, November 13, 1973

PLACE: The Great Hall of the People, Peking

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Secretary Kissinger:

Now we could be of help in two ways.

-- One, if the war should be prolonged in the obvious way, we could be helpful by supplying equipment and other services.

-- What I want to discuss today is what we can do to shorten the period of vulnerability.

One way of shortening the period of vulnerability is to point out certain areas which any force has to keep in mind in defending itself. One problem any country has is early warning. With respect to bombers, that means an air defense that can not be saturated. And with respect to missiles, it means getting some warning of missile launching.

Now any help we would give you in our mutual interest should be in a form that is not easily recognizable. With respect to missile launches, we have a very good system of satellites which gives us early warning. The problem is to get that information to you rapidly. We would be prepared to establish a hotline between our satellites and Peking by which we could transmit information to you in a matter of minutes.

Prime Minister Chou: Through the satellites?

Secretary Kissinger: Well, the information goes to Washington and then to Peking. We could do that in one of two ways that would not attract attention.

-- We could just announce the establishment of a hotline just as we have with Moscow, Japan, etc. But yours would be of a special nature but that would not be generally known. This would enable you to move your bombers and if possible you could move your missiles if you knew an attack was coming. You would then need good communications from Peking to your various bases, but we could probably help with that in some guise.

-- Another way is to sign between ourselves an agreement on accidental nuclear war, the same as we have signed with the Soviet Union, and also establish a hotline.

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I am simply thinking of methods of establishing a hotline to Peking that would not attract attention. We could also give you the technology for certain kinds of radars but you would have to build them yourselves.

* * *

Prime Minister Chou:

As for the specific matter you wished discussed, I will have to study it. And tomorrow morning before you leave, I will pay a visit to you and say farewell. I think there are some things that would be useful to us. Although the human factor is decisive in war, the practical also counts.

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